DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 156 561 SO 010 884

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TITLE The Household School as Life-Span Learning Center.
PUB DATE Feb 78
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences (Washington, D.C., February 12-17, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Affective Behavior; Behavior Development; Changing Attitudes; Educational Needs; Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Family Role; *Family School Relationship; Higher Education; Human Development; Individual Development; *Individual Needs; *Learning; Life Style; Role Models; Role Perception; *Social Change; Social Environment; Socialization; Sociocultural Patterns; Trend Analysis; Values

ABSTRACT

A constructive, effective, and realistic national educational policy should be established which takes into account the contributions of the household school to individual learning in areas of life roles, feelings, values formation, and behavior development. The adversary relationship between formal educational institutions and the family will be improved when educators understand that affective learning should be relegated to the household school rather than formal educational institutions. The household school is interpreted to include all family members and all roles played by family members within and without the family construct. The environment in which a household school functions includes traditional nuclear families and also family variations such as nuclear, extended, single-parent, reconstituted, kin network, and commune. The household school nurtures and cultivates the affective domain of each family member in four ways: (1) identification, preparation, and performance of various life roles; (2) recognition and expression of personal feelings; (3) realization and adherence to values and beliefs endorsed by the household; and (4) acknowledgment and implementation of individual behaviors. (Author/DB)

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ED156561

THE HOUSEHOLD SCHOOL AS LIFE-SPAN LEARNING CENTER

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A Paper presented at the
1978 Annual Conference of the
American Association for the Advancement of Sciences

February 12-17, 1978

Washington, D.C.

SP 010 884

The Household School as Life-Span Learning Center

It has been generally assumed that the formal education institutions, namely public and private, elementary and secondary education and higher education, are solely responsible for and conduct all activities pertinent to individual learning. Relegated to the formal education institutions is cognitive learning with its concentration on knowledge acquisition and skills development. Confusing its role and function in relation to individual learning is its increasing assumption that it also encompasses personal learning in the affective domain. Nonetheless, the informal education institution, referred to here as the household school, in fact, remains the basis for affective learning. Yet to be acknowledged and utilized, this most vital education institution has as its nucleus the family.

Formal education has become a monolithic structure of such proportions that it has assumed functions which it has virtually no capacity to perform. To date, the adversary relationship between formal education and the family continues to strengthen. The family has yet to be recognized as the foundation for individual learning. Rather than being perceived and used as a primary resource, the family is viewed by the education monolith in a "patient-doctor" perspective--constantly ailing and in need of assistance. It is obvious that this erroneous perspective needs to be corrected, and

that the relationship which currently exists between formal education and the family needs to undergo dramatic change. An initial step in doing so is the identification and examination of the household school as life-span learning center.

Household School Defined

As has been previously mentioned, the core of the household school is the family, inclusive of all variations thereof. It encompasses all family members and addresses all roles played by each member within and without the family construct. In that context, each member at various points in time functions as both learner and educator throughout his life span. From the time of his birth and until his death, every human being is a member of a household school.

The family structure provides the basic environment in which the household school operates. Within that environment, affective learning occurs which concentrates on individuality and the socialization process. Affective learning in this context addresses the life roles a person plays, the feelings he has, the values and beliefs he espouses, and the behaviors he expresses. The environment in which the household school functions, be it a nuclear, extended, single-parent, reconstituted, kin network, or commune family, is a major determinant influencing a person's affective learning capacity and functioning.

Life-span learning which encompasses a person's response and adaptation to his evolving life process with its critical incidents* and transition times**, is a primary function of the household school. To be undertaken by each family member, this function involves four major tasks serving to develop awareness and understanding, coping capacity, and adaptation to change. The tasks include: (1) the identification, preparation, and performance of the various life roles performed by each family member throughout his life span; (2) the recognition and expression of personal feelings concerning one's self and his relationship to others as interpreted by the household school; (3) the realization and adherence to the values and beliefs endorsed by the household school membership; and (4) the acknowledgement and implementation of individual behaviors conditioned by the household school environment. The mission, of the household school is to nurture and cultivate the affective domain of each family member through the learning process.

A Personal Management System

In essence, the household school represents a personal management system. It is a system operating on an experientially-based learning mode which serves to improve the

*critical incident--a significant event such as marriage, death of a loved one, divorce, retirement, in a person's life which has inordinate impact on his life process.
**transition time --the adjustment period preceding and/or following the occurrance of a critical incident.

affective functioning of the individual, both inside and outside of his family environment. Each family member performs five crucial functions pertaining to the tasks of the household school. They include:

(1) the identification of roles, feelings, values and beliefs, and behaviors practiced by the family membership;

(2) based on the identification, selections are made of those roles, feelings, values and beliefs, and behaviors that are appropriate for ones self;

(3) after the selection, performance of those choices occurs;

(4) given the initial performances, modification is made which also accommodates how the family member perceives himself, as well as how he interprets how others perceive him;

(5) once all this has been processed, the adoption of the chosen and rehearsed performances pertaining to the roles, feelings, values and beliefs, and behaviors, take place to form the compatible configuration of his own personal management system.

Life Span Learning Curriculum

Learning activities conducted within the hypothetical construct of the household school concentrate on the life span learning curriculum. The curriculum addresses

the four tasks of the household school by focusing on the critical incidents and transition times of the life process of each family member. Informal and unstructured in design, the life span learning curriculum is geared to respond to the constantly evolving critical incidents and transition times as they are experienced by each family member. The curriculum as presented here, encompasses four content areas based on the four tasks of the household school. Related to the affective domain, they are: (1) life roles, (2) feelings, (3) values and beliefs, and (4) behaviors. Learning activities conducted in the household school concentrate on essentially two approaches--observation and experience, which includes the modeling of specific role-related behaviors. These activities also represent the five functions performed by each family member as he responds to a critical incident.

In order to better understand the household school as life span learning center and as a personal management system, four examples are presented applying the five functions identified. They are based on four critical incidents in the context of the content areas of the life span learning curriculum. Eventhough in the curriculum all four content areas are operating simultaneously, in terms of the critical incidents and their transition times, each example concentrates on only <u>one</u> dimension. They are discussed accordingly:

Example	Content Area	Critical Incident
I	Life Roles	Birth of First Child
II	Feelings	Death of Loved One
III	Values and Beliefs	Divorce
IV	Behaviors	Retirement

I. Life Roles. Every person assumes many roles throughout his lifetime, which demand different sets of expectations, responsibilities, and behaviors. Over his life span, some of the roles a person fills include being a man/woman, an off-spring, a sibling, a relative; being a parent, a grandparent, a spouse, a single; being a friend, a lover, a neighbor; and a worker. The individual must be prepared to perform in a number of roles at any given time, frequently necessitating the need to make rapid changes in sentiment and behavior to accommodate the demands of each role.

It is a major task of the household school to prepare and reinforce the various and numerous role functions experienced by each family member. Preconceived notions of how each role is to be satisfied are evident within the family membership. Therefore it becomes the charge of the household school to reinforce these interpretations. This is accomplished by (1) recognition of given role expectations, (2) observation of others in the various roles, and (3) motivation to function in the prescribed and accepted mode. Feedback is a constant dynamic

of the household school with family members determining the appropriateness of given role performances.

Whether one is functioning in the role of parent, student, or worker, certain performance tasks are cultivated within the household school. Most often the parent or parent-surrogate serves as the educator in teaching the dynamics of task completion, orderliness, punctuality, performance, and aspiration level--dynamics pertinent to all three roles. The educator in the household school provides a role model for the learner through his own performance and response to the expectations of each role. The type of inducement provided the learner for mastering the dynamics mentioned, will determine the effectiveness of the household school educator.

Example I: Birth of First Child. The transition time does have a preparation period in the critical incident of birth of the first child. Explored during that period is the upcoming, new role of parent, as well as the rearrangement of existing roles. The identification of the various parental responsibilities and role-related behaviors is made. The most influential input by the household school membership is that provided by the parents of the parents-to-be. However, friends and siblings also provide parent models of child rearing. A selection process then occurs in which the new parent behaviors are assumed and accommodations to existing roles are made. When the infant arrives,

the preparation period ends with the parents beginning their performance in their new role. In actualizating this function, behaviors which seem suitable to the new parent are tried. Practiced are those clearly identified as appropriate. While testing the new parent behaviors and adjusting other role-related behaviors, modification is made to accommodate the new role of parent. It is made in terms of (1) the acknowledged expectations involved with performing in the new role; (2) the concentration on the parent role performances best suited for the newly emerged family structure, and (3) the acceptance and continued refinement of the evolving parent role. Finally, the adoption of the unique parent role occurs as judgements are made establishing its design and continuity over time through trial and error experience.

II. Feelings. Each day a person experiences a broad range of emotions, which illicit differing responses. Within a twenty-four hour period, he is capable of undergoing numerous changes in feelings, which may include love, fear, joy, boredom, excitement, sorrow, anger, nervousness, and mellowness. The expression of those feelings also impact upon relationships with others. Therefore, he is constantly required to make adjustments to his feeling state in terms of both his personal and social milieu. How he adjusts is significantly influenced by the family environment.

In terms of feelings, the second task of the household school concentrates on both the individual and social dynamics of each family member. It focuses on assisting each member in developing an awareness of his personal feelings as they surface. Then, based on the determination of their appropriateness made by the family membership, to influence their manifestations. Expressions of and responses to the range of emotions are experientially defined and demonstrated by each family member, which in turn, provides the feeling modality endorsed by the household school.

Each family member serves as educator in the household school, because each provides an example of feelings and related expressive behaviors. Using this as the data base, the learner in the household school has an entire repertoire of expressions to use concerning his feelings. Depending upon the family environment, he may either accept or reject choices from the available examples. If he selects from those available, it is likely that he will emulate with modification the expression of those feelings to which he is most frequently exposed or those deemed appropriate.

Example II: Death of a Loved One. In the critical incident of the death of a loved one, only when death is anticipated due to illness is there a preparation period in the transition time. Once death is seen as inevitable by the family members, one begins to make an accommodation.

In this incidence, the identification of one's own specific feelings is difficult because of the intense feelings expressed by the mourning family members at both an overt and covert level. Complicated by the sense of loss and the realization of dramatic adjustments to the continuation of life is the subconscious selection of feelings which serve to perpetuate a new and thought-to-be desired way of life. The new way of life may manifest itself in a performance which may capitalize on or be characterized by unconsolable grief, fear of living, or a newly found mellowness. Throughout the transition time, adjustment of feelings pertinent to the loss are made. Modification of the new way of life is accompanied by an entrenchment of emotions based on past reminisence and future anticipation of the unknown. The sensitizing which occurs contributes to a peaking in certain emotions and a numbing of others, as adoption to the new way of life occurs.

III. Values and Beliefs. Inherent to all families is a system of values and beliefs. The family membership provides the basic foundation determining good from bad, right from wrong, and truth from untruth. Based on the definitive interpretations and relationales provided, each family member is expected to adhere to the identified values and beliefs no matter how abstract or illusive they may be.

A crucial aspect of the third major task of the household school is to continuously reinforce the system of beliefs and values espoused by the family membership. This is accomplished by clearly identifying what the values and beliefs are and by providing support for their enforcement. Because of their abstract nature, the interpretations given by the family members are crucial in the enforcement process. It becomes the responsibility of the household school to develop an awareness of the impact of deviation from the approved values and beliefs. In an effort to renew the compliance of a family member who disavows them, a justice perspective may be assumed by the family membership, in which such deviation results in some form of punishment for the erring family member, or a faith perspective may be assumed in which the deviation results in forgiveness. That is not to negate a combination of the two perspectives in which both forgiveness and punishment are part of the renewed compliance effort.

Explicit explanations pertinent to the approved system of values and beliefs in the household school are mandatory for the implementation. Those family members most responsible for decision-making within the family structure serve as educators in the household school. The learner internalizes his endorsement of the selected values and beliefs based on the consistency and frequency of their

verbal judication, and on their observable portrayal through the acting out of family members. Rejection of values and beliefs by the learner often results in either voluntary withdrawal from or ostracism by the family.

Example III: Divorce. In terms of life events, perhaps nothing challenges personal values and beliefs more than the critical incident of divorce. The preparation period encompasses the waning marriage time once the decision to divorce has been made, as well as the period of formal separation. When the divorce occurs, the transition time involves the actualizing and operating of the newly determined life style. The identification function is certainly complex as previous values concerning family, children, and social acceptance are weighed as a new family structure, still the household school, is created. In addition, the spiritual foundation is also questioned as one reorders his values and beliefs, which now may be in conflict with his religious affiliation. To accommodate the adjustment to a different living arrangement, this reordering involves a critical selection process. As the adjustment is made, various levels of performance are tried and tested to re-assess and re-establish a personal sense of values and beliefs. As this occurs, modification is made which serves to clarify and solidify those chosen. Finally, adoption occurs as life as a now unmarried person encompasses changing perceptions, responsibilities, and

behaviors grounded in the newly adopted and modified values and beliefs.

IV. Behaviors. A person's daily existence is filled with actions in response to numerous stimuli. The mainstay for how he responds is ground in his family structure. Endemic to the family membership and environment is the determination of appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. Furthermore, the patterns of behavior one employs are conditioned by the family membership in terms of their own actions and reactions to given circumstances and emotions.

In its fourth major task, the household school serves to mold the behavior patterns of the individual to accommodate the family structure. This is achieved by (1) observing the behavior of family members, (2) emulating the observed behaviors, and (3) testing alternative behaviors for acceptance or rejection by the family membership. In the household school, how the family conducts itself represents the model for allowable and acceptable behavior patterns for the individual. A crucial function of the household school as it molds the behavior of each family member is determining the spectrum of allowable behaviors, as well as the reinforcement of those which are acceptable.

When behavioral patterns are being selected by a family member, the entire membership serves as educators in the household school. Since examples of behavior are provided

by the family members, the learner is, in effect, judged by his actions and reactions, and is expected to modify his behavior accordingly. From the supply of behaviors available to him, a configuration of selected behavior patterns is established, which the family strengthens, whether or not it is positively endorsed.

Example IV: Retirement. Eventhough retirement as a concept is contemplated for sometime prior to its happening, the preparation period of the transition time is nominal at best. The realization of its implications is not evident until it is an accomplished fact. The identification function concentrates on determining new behaviors relative to the reduction of work life and the increase in family and leisure life. How to adjust established living patterns to the now abundant free time, reduced income, and altered family structure involves a concerted selection process. As one selects new behaviors and attempts to change old ones, the performance function places emphasis on using time differently, which serves to establish a new and rearranged pattern of living. Behaviors reflect a revised perception of personal worth, a new found dependence/independence, and a changed role-function in the established family structure. Modification of behavior applies to relationships with family members and the establishment of a social environment conducive to the new life-style. In terms of the household school, adoption is facilitated most by the responsiveness of the family membership

to the various dimensions of the changed life pattern.

Why a Household School?

The concept of the household school has been developed in terms of its population, its function, its curriculum, and its activities as related to the family and affective learning. Based on what has been presented, it can be stated that the household school is:

1. the family--as the family changes its structure and membership, so too changes the form of the household school;

2. a personal management system--taking into consideration the unique dynamics of each family member, who contributes to the household school curriculum, it provides each member with the skills to manage the affective dimensions of his life; and

3. a life span learning center--it effects the affective learning environment of all its members from birth to death with particular emphasis on critical incidents and their transition times.

To summarize, the household school operates on a curriculum which concentrates on four elements pertinent to the affective dimensions of learning expressed by each family member. Those elements include (1) life roles, (2) feelings

(3) values and beliefs, and (4) behaviors. Furthermore, the implementation process utilized for each element consists of five basic functions--(1) identification, (2) selection, (3) performance, (4) modification, and (5)adoption. Activating the five functions is based on the occurrence of critical incidents and response to them during the resultant transition times. Feedback reinforcing adoption is provided by the family membership.

Each family member, regardless of family structure, makes a vital contribution to the experientially-based household school. The contribution consists of each member's unique actions and reactions to the critical incidents and their transition times which he personally experiences. The household school encompasses the total family milieu by focusing on personal learning in the affective domain. It serves:

1. to provide alternative responses to the critical incidents and transition times experienced by each family member, individually and collectively.

2. to prepare each family member for anticipating, coping, and resolving personal crises.

3. to develop a sensitivity to personal/individual changes over time, including recognition and accommodation to generational differences among family members.

4. to stimulate the interpersonal relations and the communication capacities of the individual.

Implications. As presented, the household school represents another interpretation of the family and its function. Clearly, human development is contingent upon one's response to his family environment. Therefore it is intended that the household school be recognized as the primary force responsible for shaping the individual throughout his lifespan. What must be acknowledge is that the family not be perceived as a constant and unchanging entity, but rather as an ever-changing body accommodating the individual in terms of the society in which he lives. Consider the following implications of the household school concept which need to be addressed.

1. The family is not viewed as an educational institution, yet it is the primary institution responsible for learning in the affective domain, with major influence on learning in the cognitive domain as well.

2. There is inadequate knowledge concerning the affective dimensions of learning, nonetheless, the household school does reveal the overwhelming impact of the family on this dimension in particular.

3. The family, that is, the household school, is not viewed as a resource, even though it holds the key to understanding and influencing the total functioning of the individual.

With the emergence of alternative family styles, the family function has reached a new level of complexity. It is inappropriate to assume (as some of the so-called experts do) that the sacrosanct nuclear family is the answer--this is simply not true. What is true is that the nuclear family has been extensively researched from numerous perspectives, with the exception of its impact on affective learning, while other family forms have not. It is high time that the family be viewed as an educational institution which contributes significantly to individual learning, beyond those dimensions measured by the other formal education institutions.

Reinforced by its concentration on learning in the affective domain, the household school maintains the interpretation of

> the family unit...as the fundamental social grouping within which individuals cope with the major challenges of their life and experience its major rewards and achievements... [It] remains a primary agency for socializing the young and for carrying out, on a day-to-day basis, the myriad of personal functions and interactions essential to human survival and well-being. (p. 41, Social Indicators, 1976.

Within that context, it is important to note that a frequent misinterpretation, which continues to be perpetuated is in equating marriage instability (based on the increasing

divorce rates) with family decline. What, in effect, has happened is the emergence of two alternate family structures which are increasing in prevalence. They are the single-person household and the remarriage household, which indeed may be more accommodating to the post-industrial society. Significant data is available presenting the growing trend of single-person households as increasing from 10.9% in 1955 to 19.6% in 1975. Eventhough data on the remarriage household is sparse, according to Social Indicators, 1976, there exists a "parellel trend in the number of divorces and the number of remarriages" which serves to reinforce the continued popularization of the marriage institution.

Taking into consideration these two alternate forms of family, the task of the household school is further broadened. Now it must also accommodate the changing family environment, while still keeping intact the cohesion of the family function. Clearly, this does involve the restructuring of the household school, itself, as it adapts its changing membership to the variable forms. Indeed the likelihood increases that one will experience at least four variations in his personal family structure throughout his life span as it progresses from the nuclear two-parent household, to the single-parent household, to the remarriage household involving two sets of parents and finally to the widowed and aging single-person household.

Recommendations. In conclusion, to credit the family for all that it provides, it is recommended

1. that a national policy on family be developed which represents the strength of the family, regardless of structure, and that it encompasses all aspects of family functioning;

2. that the family be accepted and utilized as a resource to the other existing social institutions in general, and to the helping professions in particular;

3. that the family as household school actively collaborate on a collegial basis with the formal education institutions in cultivating both the cognitive and affective learning capacities and outcomes of the family membership;

4. that the family membership, that is, the learners and educators of the household school be provided the opportunity and support of the larger society to accommodate the restructuring of personal life roles, feelings, values and beliefs, and behaviors of the changing family milieu over each member's life span; and

5. that the household school be accepted as a viable entity stimulating and enforcing appropriate social change within the context of the family as it relates to the post-industrial society.

Towards a National Policy

Efforts to establish a constructive, effective and realistic national policy on the family are undermined by the myopic perspectives and analyses being touted which assume that we are experiencing the decline or disintegration of the American family. Not only is the perspective utter nonsense, but it is destructive. If a worthwhile national policy is to be established, it must concentrate on the strength of the family as it changes in its accommodation to the post-industrial society. In order to do so, such a national policy must avoid:

1. accepting a predetermined and narrow definition of the family, and instead adopt one which is all-inclusive of the various family forms;

2. designating one ideal or model family structure, but rather emphasize the positive elements and aspects of each and every structure;

3. being influenced by the biases for special interest groups, and instead focus upon addressing the universal needs of families, such as those related to child-rearing, economic well-being, and life span learning.

The development of a plan of action of establishing a national policy on the family, naturally encompasses two other dynamic constants. Those constants, which are integrally interwoven with the family construct are education and work.

Therefore, it is within the context of education and work that a policy on family most likely can be effected.

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